

LEYTONSTONE HOLD WYCOMBE ON A ROCK HARD PITCH

by Argus

Leytonstone 0,

Wycombe Wanderers 0

AS bald as a Yul Brynner haircut — there was scarcely a blade of grass to be seen on the rock hard dust-bowl of a playing surface—the Leytonstone ground defied Wycombe Wanderers to play good football on Saturday, and won. Wycombe, desperately anxious for a win to boost their flagging League championship hopes, had to settle for a point and on the balance of play this was a just reward.

Leytonstone is a hoodoo ground for the Wanderers and there never seemed to be much chance of the bogey being beaten. The "Stones", who surprised themselves by drawing at Loakes Park recently, played robust, speedy swing-the-ball-about soccer and consistently looked the more dangerous side near goal.

SUPERB SAVE

But this was essentially a defenders' day. The forwards were in great difficulty controlling a lively ball and chances were few—the majority falling to the home attackers.

Once goalkeeper Ken Brown shook off his early uncertainty he played a great game for Wycombe—making a superb leaping save in the last minute to stop Ron Cudmore sneaking a Leytonstone winner.

As for Cudmore—the clever East Ender who has so often tormented Wycombe in the past, had a mediocre game against John Beck, who minimised the danger by clever positioning. New pivot John Bartholomew confirmed previous favourable impressions. He was rarely drawn out of position and plugged the middle very effectively.

The Wycombe forwards are still adding to the selectors' grey hairs and the current loss of form of those vital characters Len

Worley and Paul Bates is certainly not helping matters. Worley, booked for a "feet up" day of rest, made an unexpected appearance when Gerald Free was declared unfit just before the match but he and left winger, Dennis Atkins only flashed fitfully into the game.

SWOPPED POSITIONS

Atkins, destined not to flatten goalkeeper Griffin with his violent shooting, had a more adventurous career at centre-forward when he swopped positions with Bates late in the game, but even then Leytonstone never looked like conceding both points.

But so acute was Wycombe's need to find a marksman on Saturday that Atkins, Bates and Ron Fryer took it in turns to operate on the left wing in the second half as the forwards were shuffled and juggled.

HOT TIME

The big-kicking, bundling Leytonstone forwards gave Brown a hot time in the first quarter of an hour and he was far from happy lunging and thrusting for high deceiving lobbs from wingers Cudmore and Gray. When Rutter deflected a hard centre, Brown had to grab twice before saving. Then, in more hectic pell-mell raids, he twice "lost" the ball before it was rammed to safety.

With so much activity in the Wycombe half, Ron Fryer dropped back to help out and it was left to the incredibly game Cliff Trott to shoulder the main attacking burden.

But it was the Wanderers who had the most glittering opportunity to score the pay-off goal. Sent snaking through the Leytonstone defence by Atkins, Bates looked set for the back of the net but, astonishingly, he trickled the ball slowly at Griffin—a chance he would have wolfed up a few weeks ago.

If Leytonstone had the better of the first half exchanges, then Wycombe had more of the play after the break. Trott kept up some lively exchanges in the home goalmouth and flicked in his second offside-goal as well as firing in the Wanderers' best effort of the match.

Obviously satisfied with a point, Leytonstone lost much of their early dash. There was no such self satisfaction or contentment on Wycombe's part. Who knows—the Isthmian title might have been at stake. Trying all they knew to break down the big stubborn Leytonstone defence, the Wanderers permutated and plodded in vain. Only one thing beat them—their own lack of shooting dynamite.